"To promote Christian ideals for agriculture and rural life; to interpret the spiritual and religious values ch inhere in the processes of agriculture and the relationships of rural life; to magnify and dignify the l church; to provide a means of fellowship and cooperation among rural agencies: *Toward a Christian al Civilization.*"

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MY JOB IS VILLAGE RECONSTRUCTION

By D. Spencer Hatch*

May I draw for you some verbal pictures? Not too long ago I was the guest of a reigning Maharaja when he banqueted the Viceroy of India. The stories of fabulous Indian wealth and splendour became reality; the glittering jewels, the costly silks, the uniforms gay and diverse, the turbaned servants waving fans and peacock feathers, the expensive rare foods, strange odors of incense, fantastic music, outside our hall the shuffle of caparisoned elephants as guards of honour; it was all there.

The next week I drove through the night to take a cholera doctor out into a road-less village where an epidemic was taking a sad toll. I drove the car over the rough countryside as far as I could. Awaiting us were around 200 people, sick, emaciated; awaiting us with empty bottles for the quinine which could relieve their recurrent malarial fevers. Men too weak to stand, boys too old for their young years.

"Sir, have you brought the quinine, the doctor?"

I hung my head in sorrow and in hurt. "Yes, I have brought the doctor, but only the cholera doctor, for them down there." I looked down the little valley to where a widowed mother was burying her only son, dead within the hour from cholera.

"Sir, we have been waiting for two days and nights for the doctor to come. Here, Sir."

"What have you eaten these two days?" I asked.

"Nothing, Sir. We have nothing here, or in our homes."

I drove through another night to bring quinine and food. Men, women and children weakened from malaria are easy prey for cholera fears and infections.

Another picture. A group of villagers, fired by the example of others, were put-ting in all their spare time to build a road to their village. I walked over the difficult excavations and watched them lift the heavy stones to build a sizable culvert.

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I was pleased to see a pot, boiling over its traditional fireplace of three stones, there by the road they were making. And I said, "Your dinner?"

The answer came with a smile. "Oh, no Sir, only water, Sir." And again I hung my head and wondered how many of us would be willing to work for a road into our villages, on a dinner of a drink of boiled water. My only comfort was the thought that the spirit of service and self-help which these men were learning would bring them into some measure of abundance one of these days.

Still another picture. By moonlight under softly waving palms, I drove my car over a new road into a little village, to accept the honour the villagers were offering me, to open their newly constructed well. My heart was happy that night as tiny little black-eyed girls with garlands of flowers around their necks, sang a beautiful song of the blessed gift of water, of gratitude to our Rural Reconstruction Center for guidance, that no longer they must struggle with heavy water pots from the distant river, but could have clean fresh sweet water right in their midst. No loving cup was more reverently drunk than the sips the villagers took as I poured from the palm leaf bucket into their outstretched hands, water of the first drawing.

India is a country of contrasts.

India ranks today as the eighth among the industrial countries of the world. Her industries center around her only 58 cities. But nearly 90 percent of her 390 millions live in 700,000 villages, untouched by industry. India has the largest irrigation system in the world, watering 31,800,000 acres of land - less than a drop in the bucket compared to the irrigation India needs. Thousands upon thousands of villagers must walk a mile or more for water. Only the United States and Russia have more miles of railways, but countless tons of produce are carried on aching heads from roadless villages. India has 205 million head of cattle, well on toward half the world's total, but only four cups of milk a month per person.

Due to the tremendous industrial activity, occasioned by war needs, India has paid off her centuries of accumulated public indebtedness and has already a sterling balance of over 3½ billion dollars. Brave figures! She has also, a rural indebtedness estimated at 3 billion U.S. dollars, mostly to money lenders at incredibly high rates - so high the peasant accumulates debt with his years and hands it on to his descendants. Measure all this against a per capita income estimated at $20.00 a year.

India has already begun her planning for post-war reconstruction. Her committees, headed for the most part by cabinet members, have outlined plans to increase production 50 percent in 10 years, 100 percent in 15 years, with the capital expenditure of 3 billion dollars and recurring expenditure of 60 million dollars. They are going to bring more land under cultivation, prevent land from going out of cultivation, increase the out-put of present cultivation, by means of irrigation schemes; better seed from organized seed farms; by use of power machinery; better manuring, allotting a goodly sum for machinery to make chemical fertilizer... There is a plan to educate now and after the war the more than 3,000,000 mostly rural volunteers at present with the Indian army.

All these plans are on the grandiose scale. But if twenty years in India have taught me anything, it is that the only plan that will work in a great country of such diverse groups cannot begin at the top. Its beginning must be at the bottom in a very simple way right out among the people. I have witnessed the terrible mortality of attempts to work in the mass. India is a graveyard of things started. We must have self-help with intimate expert counsel. This is one of the pillars of policy which have developed and taken definite form from twenty years of rural service in small schemes in small groups and areas. These schemes become big as they multiply themselves by contagious influence; multiply themselves through hundreds of trained workers - trained to

work in the simple, intimate way.

I have been asked to tell you of this kind of experience.

Twenty-two years ago, recuperated from war service of three years with the British Expeditionary Forces on the Afghan Frontier and in Mesopotamia, I interrupted the beginnings of a theatrical career and took the girl as my bride to India. We promised our sponsors, the International Committee of the YMCA, that we would work wherever the Indian National Council placed us. We were sent to the most rural States of Travencore and Cochin and told that there was not any particular job awaiting us, but that we would see what we should do. After study of language, people, country and conditions, it was obvious that rural work was the thing needed. We set about to establish a Rural Reconstruction Center. The story which I shall tell you is the development of that work as each step proved the step next ahead.

Where should our Center be? I figured that if we could help the poorest on the poorest land to help themselves, those better off could copy fairly easily. I had studied in Denmark, for instance, and learned how the cooperatives, first called the 'poor man's cooperatives,' were so successful that the better-off farmers soon begged to join them. Later, I have had many striking proofs that the really poor never copy the rich, but the rich, having more means and probably more education, will copy anything good that the poor man has.

So we chose Martandam. The land was much poorer than other parts of Travancore State, there was less rainfall. It was as far away from any cities, but the motor road, with busses which passed through it, would be a help in reaching the Center and in transportation of products. The village and surrounding area offered representatives of the many kinds of people in Southern India. And a clinching argument for the choice was the big rural High School of the district, a point which proved even more important than we could at first visualize.

Our People

Who were these people with whom we should work? It is a great mistake to work anywhere in any country with just one kind of people or to let any one group feel they are preferred above others. As we believe in doing, we first made a study, a kind of non-stereotyped survey which would not worry the country folk. In a three-mile radius, we found just over 30,000 Hindus, a little less than one-third as many Christians, 600 Mohammedans and 1,000 others. These again were divided into smaller groups and castes, no one of which liked the others too well. Bringing these people to work together in any program of village betterment would be no mean task, but necessary and possible.

We enlisted every possible helper and followed the rule in which we believe very much. "Never do anything ourselves that we can get someone to do for us." Our limited budget warranted paying only two or three helpers, but we were successful in enlisting many honorary, unpaid, part-time workers. Only from my experience since in Mexico, do I appreciate how successful we were, and of what a tremendous value these workers were. Before starting on my last furlough I counted 1,310 of them.

The Center Develops

Our rented acre of land boasted only an Indian house and a well. We owned no land for the first eighteen years. Just over the mud wall, however, was the area high school, fortunate in spacious grounds and a good enrollment.

We built the simplest copiable structures of mud walls, bamboos, and coconut thatch to house efficiently and sufficiently our demonstration animals, the breeding bulls, milking goats, poultry. Only around twelve dollars was needed for the circulating library

whose one locked room served to keep the books, whose roofed but open reading room served also as committee room for a great number of village committee meetings, and as a stage for the educational dramas for delighted audiences who squatted on the court, and as platform for public speakers or prize givings.

Less than twelve dollars was needed for the substantial lean-to which protected the eight looms of the weaving school and the blackboards of the night school. An ingenious hut, headquarters for the Boys Work Department, cost nothing but the labour of the boys to gather the bamboo framework from the nearby jungles and to plant the antigonon vines which formed the walls and offered pasturage to the bees whose hives ranged in stately splendour behind the hut. In front the volley-ball court offered space for non-equipment games.

The home sanitary system - the bore hold latrine was illustrated.

Here on this small acre, our staff and their honorary unpaid helpers experimented with gardens and pasture grasses, and to improve the soil. They made and demonstrated the priceless value of the vegetable manure we call compost. We tried, side by side, in those simple poultry yards, Leghorns, Australian Orpingtons, Rhode Island Reds. Since it was not feasible for us to keep a dairy, we experimented with breeding bulls and came to believe, as did others in India who have experimented on a much larger scale, that it is better to use the best of the Indian cattle rather than to import stock. Indians love the cow. Comparatively few, however, could afford to own cows. We had to have the poor man's cow, the goat. Fortunately for us, a Canadian Army officer, left in India after the last war, had bred the Surti goats for twelve years until he had rehabilitated this neglected animal to her pure white, good-milking propensities. At the Center were always beehives with modern movable frames cut down after careful study to fit the two-third size apis indica.

Extension

During the two years we had been making our experiments at the Center, keeping records, collecting literature and materials, we had not lacked for audience. The 1500 school boys and girls next door could ask as many questions as children anywhere in the world. They could ask for eggs and seeds and beehives. The swarms of people passing our gate on market day would often rest their head loads on our fence posts or come in to squat under the shade of our trees the while to rest and watch the new goings on. When they saw something within the reach of their understanding and financial ability to copy, they had it. Sometimes they asked our help, sometimes they went silently away to work out their ideas in their own way.

I began to talk of an Extension Department for our Center. S. Manuel, who had nurtured Cooperative Credit Societies in South Travencore, began to bring in stories of new chicken coops replacing the dark hole under the house, of questions being asked on a whole gamut of subjects. We were invited out to meetings in the villages to speak on these subjects. Honorary workers had interested their friends; the work was on. And, incidentally, the Extension Department of Martandam Center was under way. No argument was needed for it by now, it was a natural and normal development. I told Manuel that he was to go out into the villages and not to appear at the Center except when he needed some of us or when we needed him for some special big event. He was in charge now of the Extension Department. He and his helpers were to spend all of their time with the village families, helping them on the things which they were actually trying to get done. He could call on the Center staff for any equipment, animals or poultry, for demonstration, whenever he had special events and special need of them. We had by now the condition which I have described as the "suction" rather than the "squirt gun" situation. This necessary condition means that the people were desiring and asking, trying to draw our workers out to help them. It was not the situation of an experiment station having something it thought good for the farmers and trying to

squirt it at them. People are naturally shy of squirt guns.

Pillars of Policy

This effort to bring a divided people together to work for their common good finally shook itself down into our foremost pillar of policy which we name the Comprehensive Programme. Someone has written that "this discovery of the comprehensive program bids fair to be one of the most valuable contributions to rural science in this generation." Well maybe it is a discovery. Anyway, we found out as we proceeded with this effort to help those who are so pitifully poor that there was little good in answering one side of a farmer's needs. Not much was accomplished by having a five-year plan, giving help in health. Hospitals around us discovered that all the time medicine was being given, a good part of the people were so hungry they could not possibly be healthy. New methods of agriculture, sanitation, hygiene, were useless unless a cottage industry or two filled spare time and spare hands, so that the family had some possible barter or purchasing margin. Moreover, it did little good to teach boys and girls to eat unpolished rice, sleep with fresh air, build better houses, when Grandmother ruled the house with an iron hand and knew better than young upstarts. The comprehensive program had to reach out to include grandparents and parents in its fold. Any kind of cottage industry meant the young lad had to have the help of mother and sister if the lad were to succeed. So we found that not only must we include every caste and creed, tackle every side of a man's life, we must also include the men, women and children, old and young - a very comprehensive program, literally all for the good of all. Very firmly we said a rural reconstruction program must surround the villagers with benefits and must help them to help themselves upward on all sides of life. To meet all the needs, our program established itself in five departments: spiritual, mental, physical, social and economic. We finally evolved this definition of the purpose of our work: "The purpose of rural reconstruction under our Association is to bring about a complete upward development towards a more abundant life for rural people, spiritually, mentally, physically, socially, and economically.

Just as the comprehensive program shaped itself in the course of our work, so did other pillars, side by side, each dependent on the other to make our work a coordinated whole. The foundation for rural reconstruction is our Spiritual Basis. In countries on both sides of the world where I have worked and studied, I find rural people to be particularly spiritually minded. It matters not the slightest what religion a rural dweller professes. With a group of Hindu Government officials in North India, I studied rural conditions and trained leaders. They were not ascetics, but, rather, well-educated men puzzled and discouraged by the condition of their fellowmen. They expressed the conviction that all the other helps we were teaching would not successfully regenerate the villages. They said the present forms of Hinduism and Mohammedanism were not providing a sufficient spiritual basis, and considered how to find such a foundation in those religions. They wanted also to consider the teachings of Christianity as a possible basis. They realized that officers who were careless religiously could hardly lead spiritually-minded people. In our Training Schools, Mohammedan and Buddhist student leaders joined with Hindus and Christian in common worship, feeling the need of the spiritual basis. In Mexico's villages we have recently had occasion to word this basis as follows: "The spiritual basis is the foundation for all we do on the other sides. We doubt the lasting and multiplying possibilities of things done, even though beneficial, on a purely material basis. We would live and do here as nearly as we can, as Jesus did when he went among all the villages helping the people upward from all their troubles. This is done without verbal preaching or any mention of denominations. These spiritually-minded people say that as they understand Christianity, this serving together is it. They say they like the idea - that we are joining together to live and accomplish better - to bring their villages upward or be a truer part of the Kingdom of God."

Self-help with Intimate Expert Counsel. Rural reconstruction must be a self-help movement, a movement where villagers are helped to help themselves. Workers must be on

very intimate, brotherly terms with the people, willing to go down on their hands and knees to work with the people, not to hand things down from aloof. These workers must know well what they are trying to teach so that they can really give expert counsel. But the project must be done by the villagers.

Rural reconstruction must reach down to the very poorest. Unless we give careful and special attention to this policy we shall discover that the better-off people with more education and means have appropriated the benefits and the very poorest have been left out.

In our post-war planning we must not plan for short periods or think that we can accomplish anything permanent by placing workers in a needy rural area for a short time. It is the American way to want to go more than twice as far on less than half as much, but the villager is conservative and slow, he has to be shown, and must have his counsellor stand by through his trials through the years. A rural reconstruction center is a life work always building, growing, developing. The western trained leader may be able to train within a period of five or ten years enough local leaders so that he can turn his attention to training elsewhere, but he should most certainly start his Center with the idea that it will be a permanent institution. I have always stubbornly resisted being moved about every year or so by the evident needs of many other areas. My colleague, Crowe Buck, was able to establish a college of physical education in India because he refused to be a "rolling stone" or "an emergency kit." In the great needs which will face leaders at the close of the war, even at this moment in liberated countries, we may be tempted to be emergency kits instead of master builders. We shall be forced to do much in the emergency line, but we should always keep in mind the more permanent element. Beyond doubt, we shall find in many war up-rooted sections that we move rapidly, but I trust always with the idea of permanency.

Rural Background. The type of personnel is very important. A rural background is definitely needed. I have had city men sent me whom it would have taken me the rest of my years of service to transform into useful rural workers. They lacked any sympathetic understanding of rural living. Leaders who have been brought up on a farm are at a real advantage. Because my back used to ache helping my father wrest a living from the stony fields, I can understand the discouraged despair of the Indian villager, the Mexican compesino, as yearly they pick stones from eroded fields.

But, of course, the right type of man can be trained. An outstanding student among the fifty sent by Ceylon Government to our Martandam Training School is an example. He was a competent officer of his Government with a real interest in rural people. On that first hot morning at 5:30 he reported for practical work, dressed as an officer dresses, silk shirt, silk suit, expensive tie, polished shoes. He began with the others to learn by doing, digging in the gardens, making compost, caring for the animals. The second morning he folded away his officer's clothing for the duration of training school. Soon he was out in shorts and sandals, playing games with village children. He told me quite frankly that since he returned from study in England he found he could not talk with the village people among whom he was sent to work. There was a barrier, he was so different from them. And he ended saying: "Now I know why: I was different." He finished the Martandam course with honors and the reports from his subsequent work for the Government in rural Ceylon, are records of outstanding success.

Simplicity must be the keynote in all efforts with under-privileged rural people. The worker needs to demonstrate simple habits in his own life and be willing to teach and help people practice only the most simple and inexpensive methods which they can afford. Rural reconstruction workers need to be rich in the things they can do without. The way of simplicity needs to be applied in every particular in order that expense for each project will be so low that there will be money enough to help with many projects and to bring the help within the reach of multitudes.

In general, we work only in those villages where the people want us and ask us to come. his means that in the area of our demonstration center we do not try to improve every village r every family. The success of those who enthusiastically work on projects of their own choos- ng, has a contagious effect on neighboring families and villages who soon are as interested and s desirous of our help. I have already mentioned the necessity of the "suction pump" condition, hich sociologically speaking we would call the necessity of a "felt need."

The introduction of an entirely new product generally fails because the villager lacks any- hing within his own experience to tie it to. We always find a basis for a new project and try o build on something that is already there. For instance, hand weaving, introduced into an rea where there is absolutely no weaving or no tradition for it, has generally failed although ne people may sadly need such a good home industry for spare time. On the other hand, we have ad fine success with it where there was some weaving which needed improvement in methods, in uality, or variety of product, and where we helped in the marketing.

People must feel that the program belongs to them, is their own choosing and planning and nat we are helping them. I find all along the way on both sides of the world, illustrations of ow people are called lazy when they do not work well for a rich employer in order to make him icher, but work tremendously well and hard on village problems which are to benefit themselves nd their village. The head of a very large utility organization having plenty of labor troubles ecently asked me if I could give his company counsel on how to make laborers work. A great prin- iple is involved here: we work hard for our convictions and interests, but not necessarily for hose of others.

Actual Experiences

The comprehensive program with the necessity of offering some projects for each side of life eads into a very large program. We have resolutely to choose the most important ones. Of the any which have developed in our work in India, I shall give the story of only one.

Poultry Keeping. Our surveys showed us that around many of the houses a half-dozen or so crawny chickens eked out a precarious living. These were descendants of the little jungle hen hich we still scare up when we walk in the Indian jungles. The great idea of selection seems ever to have occurred to the people, so these domesticated hens had degenerated and hardly did s well as their jungle ancestors. Each little hen lays a nestful of about nine eggs and then ools around for six months before she lays any more. The so-called hen-coop was a dirty unventi- ated black hole, generally under the house for safety, and into this all chickens were poked very night.

The White Leghorn laid such an unheard-of number of big white eggs that she became the popu- ar breed in spite of the general prejudice against white fowls. The emphasis was on eggs in a country where the taking of life is so abhorred. Many Hindus will not eat eggs because in so doing they kill the life germs in the eggs. To meet that, we put vegetarian eggs on the market, for we prove the impossible, that hens without cocks lay eggs. We explained to the people that these eggs had absolutely no sign or possibility of life any more than milk from sacred cows, and that they could eat them with the greatest safety, assurance, and profit.

To get the idea of good poultry noised about, we made a few eggs from the Center available o leaders of definite villages who were ready to spend enough time at the Center and with our Extension workers to learn how to take care of the eggs and the chickens when hatched. These ure-bred fowls were propaganda enough. Those who could afford to, came to buy settings. Others orrowed cocks for crossing. For the poor man who had no money to buy eggs, but did have a great esire to own better stock, we devised a high finance. We provided him a setting of eggs, enter- ing the cost against his name in our ledger. When his chickens were three months old he paid for the eggs with a chicken; handed over the chicken, and received his change, all set up in business, chickens in his yard, bills paid, and cash in hand.

We advocate grading-up and to this end set up the Cock Circuit. It is with a certain amount of truth that we have been called the "house of polygamy." Crossing of pure-bred males on local stock, be it poultry, cows, goats, pigs, is a rapid way of improving stock, and a cheap way. Naturally from every setting of eggs we got a surplus of cocks, but never was a cock killed. Under the supervision of an extension worker, the cocks went out on carefully selected circuits. Any village family who would get rid of their common cocks could have a pure-bred cock for two months, during which time they must get their eggs, and set them. The cock then moved on to another family for the next two months. One cock thus worked wonders in six families every year. Most people are eager to keep on breeding with pure cocks until within three generations their fine

flocks, seven-eighths pure-bred are perhaps more disease-resistive and better for them, than absolutely pure ones.

Very early we established the simplest of cooperative egg marketing as the necessary completion of the poultry project. At first such societies were not registered with the Government Cooperative Department which had such a long set of rules as to scare all women and some brave men. We taught and practiced testing of all eggs, showing the necessity of bringing in the eggs every market day. Each man or woman, girl or boy, had a number and that number with our Martandam stamp of quality was put on every egg. At first these suppliers nearly ruined their market by slipping in rejected eggs among the accepted ones, but soon they learned that the high price they were getting for their eggs came only because of the high quality. It was a great satisfaction to us to find the need for any policing disappear. During the early years this cooperative was run at our Center under our careful supervision. Later, when the members became proficient, they moved their headquarters down the road to a building of their own. They employ a secretary for the cooperative which is now registered in the Government Department as the first Poultry Cooperative Marketing Society. It has funds to loan to its members for the purchase of stock and equipment and does a splendid business.

How important this business is was emphasized at our annual meeting. Besides the double price over local market value that members receive in hand daily, each member receives a bonus from the profits of the society. Sirvaramakrishna Iyer, a Brahmin headmaster of the village of Irenepuram, came up to the platform to receive thirteen rupees in bonus and was roundly applauded. He begged the chairman's permission to state to the audience that he was still an orothodox Hindu, but when poultry keeping became such a good thing for the poor he had helped the boys and girls of his school to have White Leghorns in their homes. This large bonus was to be divided among these students who had supplied the eggs. Incidentally, many of the boys were able to attend school because their poultry paid their school fees. This Brahmin Hindu was elected next president of the Poultry Cooperative.

Training. When local leaders began to feel the need of more knowledge, we started with a two weeks summer school. Gradually through the years, with picked leaders, men and women, coming from all over India, Burma and Ceylon, from Egypt, from China, that simple beginning has grown into the Martandam Practical Training School for Rural Reconstruction. We learn by doing, working long hard days for the longest course which runs nine months now. We run also, week-end courses over three months for those who cannot spend time away from their land or their schools, and educational weeks for a whole cluster of villages. Well over a thousand of our students have gone out to their home areas to spread the knowledge of the more abundant life to their fellowmen. When the file of letters from former students gets too full we publish our "Accomplishment Bulletin." These stories of actual work done by our students, offer encouragement, new ideas, new methods to us all, as well as give us strength in the knowledge that we are none of us working alone, but together as members of the Martandam Extension Larger Team.

There was Hussein Ali Orphy, who came to us from Egypt, full of energy, full of mischief, full of a real ideal to serve his fellowmen. Orphy entered into the practical work of Martandam with a zeal that fired even the zealous. He returned to a rural improvement center near Asiut along the Upper Mile. After a year, Orphy sent us his first Annual Report for both his Center and its Extension Area. It sounded strangely like Martandam. He had applied, with wonderful effect in his distant country, the principles he had learned with us. And now, after five years, comes the word that Orphy is Director of Village Improvement with the new Egyptian government.

All the way across this great world of ours, the needs of rural people are similar. These extension principles and methods we have discussed will serve in every country, when adapted to localities. They will work in all the war-torn countries where land must be reconditioned, where homes must be rebuilt, where lives must be rebalanced, where man must be spiritually, mentally, physically, socially and economically strengthened.